

**Shimkus Opening Remarks at Environment and Climate Change  
Subcommittee Markup of 15 Bills**

**September 26, 2019**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for recognizing me to speak at our first subcommittee markup of the Congress.

The subcommittee's agenda for today is ambitious and I appreciate the conversations we have had prior to the markup to make today a more manageable and productive experience for all the members of the subcommittee.

Today we will endeavor to work together where we can, agree to disagree where we must, but always be civil and respectful of each other and our views.

The first bill we consider – which I know is a priority for Chairman Pallone – is the Alan Reinstein Ban Asbestos Now Act. I think we can work together on this bill to get to a good place and I want to get to “yes” on it if we can. As I mentioned at the legislative hearing on this bill, Madison County, IL – which I represent here in Congress – has the greatest amount of asbestos litigation filed before it than any other jurisdiction in the country. I believe the Majority and Minority staffs have had productive discussions on this bill and I understand things are moving in a good direction. I look forward to hopefully congratulating my colleagues on a deal we have found when this bill is considered at full committee.

The Baker's Dozens of bills on perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances are a trickier group. As I mentioned at the legislative hearing, it seems like a big departure from regular scientific review and practice to start simply banning, regulating, or otherwise limiting potentially thousands of substances without the appropriate scientific due diligence having been done. It does concern me that with

all the PFAS legislation flying around the Capitol, the Environmental Protection Agency has yet to testify on the Record about the advisability or feasibility of ANY of these bills, thereby allowing members to ask about alternatives.

That said, I am aware that some informal, technical comments have been sent to anyone who has asked for them – so there is some understanding of what these bills may do.

Based upon that, in the PFAS space; I think it is reasonable that with some changes we can get to a good place on both the full Committee Chairman's bill and the former full Committee Chairman's bill.

H.R. 2626 introduced by Mr. Upton will drive cooperative agreements between the Federal government – including the Defense Department – and the States to ensure the Federal government cleans up contamination to the lower of Federal or state standards.

Mr. Pallone's bill, H.R. 2533, also seeks to help drinking water systems that are having trouble treating PFAS in their drinking water to obtain grants for that purpose.

I also think it is reasonable that with some changes we can get to a good place on H.R. 2638 and H.R. 2566, authorizing the issuance of fire fighting foam guidance and labels for cookware about whether they contain PFAS.

Finally, while I cannot support it as drafted today, I am committed to working with you on H.R. 2608, a bill to get appropriate toxicity testing information into EPA's hands so it can be informed about the "real" and not "supposed risks" of these chemicals.

Unfortunately, Mr. Chairman, many of the other PFAS bills are not ones I can see agreement as something that will happen easily or soon. At the appropriate time, I will go into my reasons.

We will also consider H.R. 2699, the Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act of 2019, which Mr. McNerney is leading this Congress. This bill reflects the considerable work on this Committee to establish a workable path to restart the Yucca licensing process while maintaining permanent disposal as the cornerstone of our national policy.

This bill reflects the bi-partisan compromise to authorize the Department of Energy to move forward with a temporary storage program and to contract with a private company for this purpose. This new policy approach resulted from the thoughtful interactions with Members in the last Congress, including my good friend Ms. Matsui of California. The new policy approach addresses their concerns about more rapidly removing stranded nuclear waste while maintaining “linkage” to completing the safety license process for a permanent repository. We must remember Congress established this process in law to address the national priority for disposing of nuclear waste—and it is the only way we can address interim concerns. I look forward to moving this bill today.